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SERMON

Preach'd at the

Publick Ordination

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Mr. Joseph Denham

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GLOUCESTER,

December 8. 1713.

By STRICKLAND GOUGH,
Minister in Bristol. — K

To which are added,
Mr. *Denham's* Confession of FAITH;
Together with his
Answers to other *Questions* propos'd
on that Occasion.

The CHARGE delivered by Mr. HENRY
CHANDLER, Minister at *Bath.*

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STERMON

Printed at the

Publick Ordination

Mr. Joseph Denham

AT
GLOUCESTER





T O

THOMAS BROWN of Glou-
cester, *Esq*;

SIR,

WHEN the Publication of what is contained in the following Sheets was, at the Request of many Persons, resolved upon, it could be no Difficulty to determine to what Patron it was to be Dedicated and Inscribed. If That be any Mark of Respect and Honour, it certainly belongs to You. The generous Support and Encouragement You are pleased to give to the Ministry of that Person whose Ordination was the Occasion of these Discourses, and what You have done for the Good of that Congregation to which he ministers, entitles You to it. Nor may we forget the Publick Testimony You have lately given to the Principles of Nonconformity, by choosing rather to part with the Dignity of being a Magistrate of the City wherein You live, than with the Liberty of worshipping GOD according
to

The DEDICATION.

to Your Conscience. In which last signal Act of Sincerity and Self-Denial, we must Record it to Your Honour, that we could never discern that You have parted with Your Moderation; but tho' You laid down Your Office, You still kept up Your Charity, and are a Lover of Peace, and of good Men, whether they be Conformists or Dissenters. This is a Temper truly Divine, and You are too much confirmed in it to be in danger of being infected with that Party-Spirit which is so much in Fashion. Sir, we have many other Things to add of this Kind, and which would not be improper on this Occasion, were we not acquainted with the great Modesty which increases the Lustre of Your other Vertuous Dispositions; and which, tho' it strictly forbids that any thing but the Truth, yet will not permit that the whole Truth should be said concerning You. For this Reason we shall forbear Enlarging, where we might justly do so; and shall only add, That we beseech the GOD of all Graces to bless and concur with the Truths we now present to You and the World, that they may promote the Glory of his Name, the Edification of his Church, the Usefulness of Ministers, and the Salvation of many Souls, and that we are,

S I R,

Your most Humble Servants,

Henry Chandler.
Strickland Gough.

A N

Ordination Sermon.

Titus i. 9.

Holding fast the faithful Word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound Doctrine both to exhort and to convince the Gainsayers.

THE Apostle directs this Epistle to Titus as a Minister of the everlasting Gospel. And for that Reason he spends the greatest Part of it in shewing him what he and all other Ministers ought to be, if they would be faithful to God, to their own Souls, and to the Souls of others. And indeed, as there is no Part of Scripture but deserves our most serious Consideration, so this in particular, and the two foregoing Epistles to Timothy, deserve to be read and studied by every Gospel Minister as much as possible. And if we would thus seriously and impartially consult it, we should certainly find that it is a no less difficult and weighty, than honourable Work which we are employed about. In the sixth and seventh Verses of the Chapter where my Text is, the Apostle tells us, *a Bishop must be blameless*, i. e. unspotted in his Character and Conversation; not free from Infirmities, for that's impossible for any Man to be in this World, but one who cannot justly be accused of scandalous Sins commonly practised by him. He tells us, that he must be the *Husband of one Wife*, i. e. he must not be guilty of Poligamy, which was much more common in those Times than now.

A

Having

Having faithful Children; not that it is in our Power to make all our Children truly religious, but we must endeavour by our Instructions, Prayers, and Examples to engage them to be so. *Not self-willed*, i. e. not obstinate in any Sin, nor so refractory in little Things, as not to be willing to condescend to others for their Edification. *Not soon angry*; one who can govern his Passions so as to bear the Provocations which will be not seldom offered him from the World. *Not given to Wine*, so as to use it intemperately and excessively; he may use it, but must not be given to it. *No Striker*, i. e. not quarrelsome, so as in his Passion to mischief those that provoke him. *Not given to filthy Lucre*; he must abhor and avoid all that Gain of the World which is unjust and dishonest, and he must sit loose even to that which is lawful, because in comparison of spiritual Riches, it is filthy and abominable. In the 8th Verse the Apostle goes on, and tells us positively what a Bishop or Minister must be. He must be *a Lover of Hospitality*, i. e. one that is ready to entertain Strangers, and so charitable as to relieve all the Children of God who are poor and necessitous, Strangers as well as others, according to his Abilities. *He must be a Lover of Good Men*; Love to every good Man, let him be of his Party, of his Persuasion, in his Interest or not, must reign and govern in the Soul of a Gospel Minister; he must love their Graces tho' not their Corruptions. Again, *he must be sober*; this seems to be opposed to Frothiness and Vanity, and denotes that he must not only be free from Drunkenness, but from that foolish Jestings which is not convenient; so that he must be grave and serious, having his Conversation seasoned with the Salt of heavenly Wisdom, to render it both savory and useful. Further, he must be *just*, not addicted to tricking, cheating and undermining, but upright in his Dealings with all the World. Once more, he must be *holy*, i. e. uni-

universal Holiness must be the Ornament which must recommend his Preaching to them who hear it ; so that a heavenly Mind, a Godlike Temper, a Soul that is above the World, and resembles the Heaven he presses others to seek after, must appear and shine in his own Life and Actions. And to show that he is thus holy, he must be *temperate*, i. e. moderate in the Use of every thing in this World, for this seems to be a larger Part of his Character than that which was before-mentioned, viz. that he must not be given to Wine, and signifies that he must be moderate in the Use of all lawful Enjoyments ; moderate in eating as well as drinking, moderate in his Apparel, and moderate in his Recreations. And then the Apostle adds in my Text, as to the instructive Part of the Character of this Man of God, viz. He must *hold fast the faithful Word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound Doctrine both to exhort and to convince the Gainsayers*. This is a comprehensive Description, as we shall see by and by, and contains an Account of what a Bishop or Pastor must both preach and do, what he is to be both as to his Doctrine and Conversation.

THE Words may be divided into Two general Parts, each of which I shall very briefly consider, and then conclude with some Application.

First, HERE is the Duty of a Minister of the Gospel express'd, *To hold fast the faithful Word as he hath been taught*.

Secondly, HERE is the End for which he is to discharge this Duty, or another Part of his Duty, which the former has a Tendency and Respect to, *That he may be able, by sound Doctrine, both to exhort and to convince the Gainsayers*.

First, HERE is one great Duty of a Gospel Minister declar'd, viz. *To hold fast the faithful Word as he hath been taught*. And here you may take Notice of Four Things.

1st, THE Matter about which the Duty of a Christian Minister or Pastor is conversant. It is

said to be *the Word of God*, the Gospel of CHRIST, wherein GOD has made known his Mind to the World, that wherein he speaks, and that loudly too, to Sinners to be converted and reconciled to him. Sometimes CHRIST himself is called the

John i. 1. *Word of GOD, In the Beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* Sometimes the Scripture or the Gospel of CHRIST is

Psal. cxix. 9. *called the Word; Wherewithal shall a young Man cleanse his Way? By taking heed thereto according to thy Word.* Now, 'tis this is to be the Matter we are to preach to the People; 'tis not to be the vain Philosophy, not the particular Notions or Opinions, not the groundless Imaginations of Men; nay, we are not to preach any thing that only serves to advance a Party, or a worldly Interest, and to aggrandise or gratify our selves. We

2 Cor. iv. 5. *are not to preach our selves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and our selves Mens Servants for Jesus Sake.* We are

Isa. viii. 20. *to go to the Law and to the Testimony; and if we speak not according to this Rule, it is because there is no Light in us.* A Gospel Preacher should not quote Plato, and Seneca, and Tully, more than CHRIST and his Apostles; at least he is never to prefer the Notions of the Former to the infallible Truths of the Latter. I deny not but the excellent Sayings of the Heathen Moralists may be of considerable Use to press Men to Vertue and moral Duties, as they show how very agreeable they are to the Light of Nature, and that natural Conscience and meer Heathens will condemn those pretended Christians who neglect them. But we are not to postpone the Truths delivered by such as were inspired by GOD to the Sayings of Men, who had nothing but the *Ignis fatuus* of depraved Reason to direct them. On the contrary, these are to be utterly dejected when they thwart and contradict the other. And the like may be said of those Traditions which are so much cried up by the Papists; they may be Helps, tho' often they are not so much as that, but they are never to be the Rule we are to preach by.

Secondly, THE next thing we are to observe, is the Character of this blessed Word, which is to be the Rule of our Preaching, it is the *faithful Word*; and is it not a faithful Word, when it requires the greatest Faithfulness in all that would be saved by it? For Sincerity is the very Term on which it offers Salvation to us, so that it is impossible we should be saved without it: But it is the faithful Word, because all the Promises it makes will certainly be accomplished; they are all *Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus*, not one Iota of them shall ever fail; they are the Promises of the faithful God who *keeps Covenant and Mercy to Thousands of them who love him*; and they are the Promises of that blessed JESUS who is *the faithful and true Witness*; so that that Minister who preacheth the true Word of GOD may safely assure Sinners, that if they perseveringly believe and obey the Gospel, all its Promises, as to Pardon, Grace and Glory, shall be made good to them. And this is a great Encouragement both to him that preaches, and to them who hear him; he offers nothing but what his Lord and Master will be sure to stand to; he goes not by the Commission of an unfaithful or changeable Creature, who may never fulfil one Syllable of what he promises in his Name. 'Tis true, if we offer more than is in our Commission, we may expect at last to be sham'd and deserted. But that Ambassador of CHRIST, who keeps to his Credentials, can't be forsaken in what he promises; he has divine Veracity and Unchangeableness to secure him. In like Manner, as to the Threatnings he pronounces in the Name of CHRIST, and by his Authority, he need not peevishly fret like *Jonah*, for fear he should appear to be a false Prophet: No, he may assure the Sinner, the Storm will fall terribly upon him in a little while; his Repentance will avert it, but nothing else can. But further, we may observe under this general Head,

Thirdly,

Thirdly, THE ACT wherein the Duty of Ministers as it refers to this faithful Word does consist, viz. They must *hold it fast*; and they have Reason to do so, if it be the Word of God, and so faithful, that it shall infallibly be accomplished. But how must they *hold it fast*? I answer, They must hold it fast as to their own Belief of it. Ministers are liable to Temptations of Unbelief as well as others, and the Devil does often strive to shake their Faith, that by their Doubts others may be discouraged; but they in a peculiar Manner should resist him steadfast in the Faith. The Faith of *Peter*, a blessed Apostle of our LORD JESUS, was greatly shaken; but CHRIST prayed for him that it might not fail, and by Virtue of that Prayer he held it fast, so as to strengthen his Brethren. They must also hold it fast in their continued urging it upon their Hearers; they are to press Men to hold fast the Word of CHRIST, and they must do so in Season and out of Season. If *Satan*, by Enticements, or by Persecutions, tempts them to drop preaching it, they must not hearken to the Temptation, tho' it be never so powerful. Again, They must hold it fast so as to defend it against Opposers. *In the latter Days*, the Apostle tells us, *some will depart from the Faith, giving heed to seducing Spirits, and to Doctrines of Devils, and there will arise Scoffers, walking after their own Lusts*; and in every Age there are those who will be confronting and disputing against the Truths of CHRIST, nay, against all Religion whether natural or reveal'd; therefore 'tis necessary a Minister should be able to defend them. And so indeed the original Word signifies (†) a Defender, or one who does sustain as well as embrace. We must maintain and bear up the Interest of God in the World, whatever Hands are at work to pull down and to destroy it; tho' all Hell be combined against the Belief and Obedience of the Gospel, and tho' all the Earth too should forsake it, so must not we; but go on pleading and bearing our Testi-

(†) ἀντιχρῆ-
244707.

Testimony for them, by preaching, conferring and suffering, nay, and by dying too, if ever we are called to it: God grant Protestant Bishops and Ministers may have no Occasion again thus to seal their Testimony with their Blood in these Kingdoms! Again, they are to hold fast the Word in their Obedience to it, for they are to be *Examples to others*; and this the Apostle joins with their preaching the Word of God. *But* 2 Tit. i. 7. *Speak thou the Things which become sound Doctrine in all Things, shewing thy self a Patern of good Works.* 'Tis the commanded Duty of every Christian, and much more of every Minister, *by well doing, to put* 1 Pet. ii. *to Silence the Ignorance of foolish Men.* Alas! they 15. are obliged often, like the Prophet, *all the Day* Rom. x. 21. *long to stretch forth their Hands to a disobedient and gainsaying People*; therefore they are to take all the Ways they can to convince them, not only by their Preaching, but by their most circumspect Walking and Example; they must be Ensamples to the Flock, and shine as Lights in a dark World, that Men may see their good Works, and glorify their Master who is in Heaven. To conclude this first General, the last thing observable under it is,

* Fourthly, THE Reason or Foundation of this Duty, imply'd in those Words, *As he has been taught*: This faithful Word a true Minister is taught of God, and therefore he ought to keep and preserve it. The original Words may denote, (*) That he should hold it fast in his Doctrine and Teaching, and that he should not cease to instruct this People in it: Or else you may understand it thus, That faithful Word which will be available to teach Men the Things of their Peace and Happiness. We are to hold fast, not useless, but that profitable Knowledge which is truly instructive to the Souls of our Hearers, and will direct them to their Duty, and in their Way to Heaven; and what is so instructive we have Reason to hold fast. But you may also suppose very naturally, that

(*) καὶ τὴν διδασχὴν πιστῶς λόγῳ.

that the Apostle here limits in another respect the Word which we are to preach to the World; it must be no other than that which we have been taught by God himself. As he is here giving Directions for the ordaining Elders at that time in the Apostolical Age, the Teaching he refers to is that of the Apostles, or of Apostolical Men, but more especially of the Spirit who directed them, and must indeed direct every Minister, if he would be taught the Truth as it is in Jesus. As this Direction may relate to Ministers to the End of the World, the Teaching he would have them look after, is that of the written Word, indited by these Apostles, and of the HOLY GHOST, who is the Spirit of a sound Mind; we are never to preach any other Doctrine than what we are thus taught, unless we would be *accursed*; we are to preach *the Things, not which the Wisdom of Man, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth*; and what we are so taught, we may be sure we are taught it of God; and then let Men and Devils be against it, we may, nay, we must go on declaring and publishing it to the World; for *Woe is unto us if we preach not such a Gospel*. So that the short of the Case is this, Ministers must be taught of God, or else they can never teach Mankind as they ought to do. God teaches them partly by his Word without them, and partly by his Spirit within them, enlightening their Understandings with celestial saving Truth, Doctrine, Knowledge, &c. and setting all this home upon their Affections, so that it purifies their Hearts, and thence issues forth into their Lives and Practices; and thus they have more than a meer Notion of the Truths they deliver from the Pulpit; they feel 'em, and have an experimental Knowledge of 'em, which is as truly, if not as much needful to a successful Minister, or at least one who would be accepted of God, as any thing in the World can be. The Ministrations of a Hypocrite no doubt are valid as to others who are unacquainted with his

Gal. i. 8.

1 Cor. ii.

13.

1 Cor. ix.

16.

his Unbelief and Hypocrisy; but I can't believe God properly calls a Man to be a Minister when he has never sanctified him; no, he runs before he is sent, and as he is likely to run his Flóck into the Ditch, so without Repentance he'll run himself into Hell: But on the other Hand, they whose very Souls are moulded into the Image of the heavenly Doctrine, they who are prepared both by the Notional and Experimental Teachings of CHRIST, they who have the true Anointing of the Spirit, not infallibly to inspire them, but to guide them into all necessary Truth, and incline their Hearts to love as well as believe it; these are the Persons whom God commissions, and they may depend upon it, that their Way and their Call is clear, so that they may and ought to hold fast the Word, and to go on exhorting and convincing the Gainsayers. And this leads me to the other general Head I proposed to speak to, viz.

Secondly, HERE is the End for which a Minister is to discharge the Duty we have been describing, or another Part of his Duty which the former has a Tendency or Respect to, viz. *That he may be able by sound Doctrine both to exhort and to convince the Gainsayers.* He must be furnished with sound Doctrine, such as is firm and true, and will bear the most impartial Enquiry, and the most diligent Search that can be made into it, such as will stand any Trials. The Expression is here altered, but is of the same Importance with that of the *faithful Word* in the former Part of my Text: Now this sound Doctrine or faithful Word a Minister must hold fast both in his Belief and Practice for these two Ends and Purposes:

1st, THAT he may exhort.

2^{dly}, THAT he may convince the Gainsayers.

1st, THAT he may exhort. This is one of the great Things the Ministers of the Gospel are to be employ'd about; they are to give Attendance to 1 Tim. iv. Exhortation: But how shall they exhort Sinners 14.

to come into, or to continue in the Faith of the Son of God, if they themselves are departed from it? I might here enter into a large Field of Discourse concerning the Method of Exhorting; but I am sensible I am speaking now before some who need not those Informations. Give me Leave only to be your Remembrancer, that we are to exhort both in publick and in private, and from House to House, when there is occasion; we are to do it by explaining, and we are to do it by pressing the Truths of CHRIST; we are to speak to the Minds and to the Hearts of Men; we are to suit our Exhortations to the various Passions of those who hear us, awakening their Fears, sometimes as Sons of Thunder, and encouraging their Hopes, acting sometimes as Sons of Consolation. All this and more we are to do with all Long-suffering and Doctrine, and in the most plain unaffected manner we are capable of, mixing the Majesty with the Simplicity of the Gospel, so that all may understand, and yet none despise it. Now, it's flatly necessary to these Things, that a Minister should both believe and practise the Religion he exhorts to. He must certainly hold fast the Word he was taught of God, or else he'll seldom or never exhort at all; his forsaking the Truths of CHRIST will be apt to make him draw back from the Service of CHRIST; or if he does go on to exhort, he'll exhort People out of the Way of God, exhort them into the same erroneous Paths he himself is seduced into. This will be the natural Effect of a Minister's not holding fast the Word; and the more dangerous the Errors are which he holds or practises, the more dangerous

See Col. ii. 17. will be his Exhortations. *Let no Man beguile you of your Reward in a voluntary Humility, intruding into those Things which he hath not seen, not holding the Head; he that does not hold fast the Head will only deceive and beguile Souls to lose their Reward for ever. In this Case the Eye is become blind*

blind and dark, and then *how great is that Dark-
ness?* Nay, how fatal must it be to the People,
when *the Blind leading the Blind, both must fall into
the Ditch?* I will only add, the Word which we
render to *exhort* signifies also to * *comfort*. <sup>* παρα-
λειτουργία</sup> Mini-
sters are to comfort those who are cast down, and
many such doubting and fearful Christians they
will meet with almost every where; but how
shall they comfort others and remove their
Doubts, when they are full of Doubts, nay, of
downright Unbelief themselves? What Consola-
tions can they afford, whose Consciences are
either hardned or wounded by their own wil-
ful habitual Sins? Besides, all the Performances
of such wicked Ministers must be so cold and life-
less, that they cannot make any deep Impressions
upon the Hearts of their Hearers; they can't ex-
hort or effectually persuade them; while they
don't come from the Hearts of the Preachers,
they'll only freeze upon their Lips. Above all,
'tis absolutely necessary we should hold fast the
Word, if ever we would come up to the Precept
of exhorting *in Season and out of Season*. Few Mi-
nisters who live many Years escape Persecution;
I don't mean only the Persecution of the Tongue,
for that God knows we never escape, at least in
this Age; but I mean publick Persecutions, oc-
casioned by Revolutions and a Change of Times.
Now what shall the Man do when this Kind of
Temptation happens to him, and he must run
the Hazard of Life and Liberty? Why, if he has
not fast hold of the Word, he will deny CHRIST
before Men, and so at last be denied by him be-
fore his Father which is in Heaven.

2dly, THAT he may convince the Gainsayers. The
Employment of a Gospel Bishop or Pastor is not
only to exhort, but to *rebuke with all Authority*. Titus ii.
He is to turn Men from Darkness to marvelous
Light, and if any are stubborn, perverse and ob-
stinate in Sin, he is to endeavour to make 'em
sensible of the Error of their Ways. If any are

not only seduced, but turned Opposers and Enemies to the Doctrines and Precepts of Christianity, he is to stand up in Defence of them. I confess this Duty of Rebuking is a very tender Point, and ought to be managed with great Prudence and Caution. It is no small Part of the Difficulty of this Office that we are to deal often with stubborn Offenders, and with Persons of various Passions as well as Interests; and to treat with them so as not to raise their Corruptions, but convince their Consciences, requires almost Angelical instead of Human Wisdom. Great Government of our own Tempers, great Knowledge of the World, and a good Insight into the various Ways of Address, are needful to perform this Duty in a tolerable Manner; so that I had almost ask'd, Who is sufficient for this single Part of our Work, if there were no other? But our Insufficiency is of God; and if we are taught by him, his Grace will be sufficient for us. But how shall that Minister defend the Truths of the Gospel, who does not believe nor practise them? Who can expect him to convince the Wicked of their Sins, who is himself no less guilty than they? With what Heart or with what Face can he pretend to reprove them? Or if he has the Presumption to do so, will not *Physician heal thy self* be retorted upon him, and pass for a sufficient Answer too? I know such Ministers commonly reply, *The People must do as they say, and not as they do, mind their Doctrine, but not their Example*; and this would be something, did we not see that the World is constantly led by Examples more than by Rules and Precepts. This I readily grant, and wish the People would more consider it, a wicked Hearer will never be the less miserable for living under a wicked Minister, or if it lessens, it will not prevent his Damnation. Every Man must be judged by what he has done in the Body: But after all, there's no disputing against Matter of Fact, and 'tis certain that Ministers Lives are more instructing than

than their Preaching, and a greater Strefs is universally laid upon them ; so that he is never likely to convince the Wicked of their Sins, who is as vile and wicked as themselves. We may certainly conclude then, that he who is not found both in his Faith and Practice can never discharge the main Business of a Minister as he ought to do. He who does not believe the Gospel, will never strive heartily to convince Men ; and he who does not live up to it, never can ordinarily convince them. Men will not regard him, and God is not likely to succeed him. For this ought chiefly to be considered, 'tis the Spirit alone that can effectually convince. *Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, but 'tis God must give the Increase* ; but what Hopes can a Minister have of the Spirit's Concurrence when he is in Jest in all that he delivers, when his whole Life demonstrates that he does not believe one Word of what he says to his Congregation ? 'Tis true, the Spirit is not confined in his Operations, but blows in what Part of the Compass he pleases ; and accordingly sometimes blesses the Ministry of weak Men, and sometimes of wicked Men to the Salvation of Souls ; but this is perfectly arbitrary and very uncommon, and that which is not to be expected ; no Man can depend upon it, but rather the quite contrary ; they who quench the Spirit by their want of Faith and Holiness, can't reasonably suppose that he will succeed them, as if they were some of the best of Men, as indeed Ministers ought to be ; not like *Jeroboam's* Priests, taken out of the Dregs of the People, but such as for their Extraction, if possible, but especially for their Knowledge and Goodness, are the Honourable of the Earth. Then they may rebuke with Authority, their Words will carry Weight and Importance with them, and by the Help of God, who will then be most ready to help them, they may effectually convince the World of Sin, of Righteousness and of Judgment, and of all those Things which concern its Salvation. THUS

THUS I have considered the two general Parts I have observed in the Words. What remains is only to make some brief Improvements of these Things, with which I shall conclude.

First then, HENCE I infer, that Prayer and Meditation are two most necessary Duties in every one that will be and act as a Minister of the Gospel. They are Duties which are necessary to every Christian, and they are more especially necessary to every Minister; for without them he can never lay hold of the Word of God, nor can he hold it fast after he has done so. He must meditate and study the faithful Word, in order to understand it; and 'tis as needful that he should pray often, and pray earnestly too for the Spirit to help him to understand it. And this may suffice for the chief Directions both of those who are already in the sacred Ministry, and to any others who may be training up to it in Order to get this sound Doctrine so as to be fit to exhort and to convince. Meditate and study the Word of God, not forgetting other Helps to the understanding it, especially the Languages, History and Philosophy, without which no Man can be a thorough Proficient in Theology: But be sure to join Prayer with your Meditations, that you may engage the divine Spirit to teach you the wondrous Things of his holy Law. But then,

Secondly, I infer also, that Ministers have great Reason to look to their Hearts. 'Tis the Advice of the wise Man to all Persons, *Keep thy Heart with all Diligence, for out of it are the Issues of Life*; but this is never more proper than when 'tis apply'd to the Ministers of CHRIST. They are to be sound in their Heads, but if their Hearts be bad, their Heads can never be clear; *holding Faith and a good Conscience, which some having put away concerning Faith, have made Shipwreck*. Nor is it less requisite that we should keep our Hearts with our utmost Diligence, in order to that good Conversation which must adorn our Doctrine, if we desire

Prov. iv.
23.

1 Tim. i.
19.

desire to do any real Service to Mens Souls, seeing out of the Heart are the Issues of Life, and a corrupt Tree cannot bring forth good Fruit.

Thirdly, If it be the Duty of Ministers to exhort their People, then it must be the People's Duty to attend to their Exhortations. They are to be constant in hearing them, and they are to be serious in it too, not captious and censorious, but with Meekness receiving the ingrafted Word, as Learners who come to be taught the Things of their Peace, and to be persuaded to the Practice of them. All this they must be, or else they fall under the Notion of *Gainsayers*; and besides, our Office is perfectly in vain, it cannot attain its End, 'tis an useless and an insignificant Institution. And they who think they are not obliged to hear and hearken too, do as it were reproach the Head of the Church with such Words as these, viz. He has appointed a Set of Men to exhort us, but he might have sav'd his Labour, for we'll choose whether we'll be exhorted or no, whether we'll pay any Regard to 'em or no; we find our selves still at Liberty, and we will be sure to take it to spurn and laugh at their Admonitions. How such Language as this arraigns the Wisdom of your Lord and ours, I need not say, 'tis too plain to need a Comment; I wish I cou'd say it were not as plain that this is a Temper too prevailing in our Congregations.

Fourthly, If what has been said be true, then there is a Respect due to the Persons of Ministers for their Work Sake. You see they are employ'd, not about the Trifles of this World, not about vain and nice Speculations of no Use or Advantage to Mankind, but about the faithful Word of God, about Things which they have been taught of God; (and among the very Heathens they who had received any Message from their Gods, were always treated with Respect and Veneration) they are employ'd in preaching and propagating Doctrines which are not like those
of

* Discourse
of Free-
Thinking:
Rights of
the Ch.
Contempt
of the
Clergy.

of the Heathen Priests, that are many of 'em perfectly ridiculous, but such, as are sound and substantial, and qualified to persuade Men, nay, able to save their Souls. Surely such an Order as this ought not to be treated as the Off-scouring of all Things; yet nothing is more common than to hear the utmost Contempt offered to the sacred Ministry, and to those who belong to it. This is the constant Subject of the Pamphlets and Conversation, nay, of some of the most admired Books * of the Age. It has been observed by some, that this is a Humour incident to the English above any Nation: Sure I am, it can scarce be more incident to any Nation or any Age, than it is to this. I can't speak so freely as I would on this Head, because it looks so much like speaking for our selves; but there are some Occasions on which we may without Vanity magnify our Office, especially when 'tis become the prevailing Humour of the Age to attack and undermine it; altho' even in that Case one would silently look on and bear with the Follies of Men, were it not too evident that Religion it self is hereby sap'd and destroy'd, for that must certainly stand or fall with the Credit and Authority of a Gospel Ministry. I am not at all shy to confess that the Contempt of the Clergy is too much owing to the open Debauchery of some, and to the Pride and Tricking, the Selfishness and Flattery of others. But then methinks Mens Indignation should fall only on such corrupted Ministers, who 'tis freely confess'd deserve it, not upon the Ministry it self; they ought to make a fair Distinction between those who are a Scandal to their Office, and others who are Faithful, Peaceable and Conscientious. Yet how commonly these are assaulted with greater Fury than the former, is easy to be observed. I would only ask the Persons who think to excuse their Contempt of the Ministry by the gross Corruptions of some Ministers, Whether we are all a Scandal to our Profession?

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Are we all proud, and covetous and immoral? I would appeal from their sleeping to their waking Consciences, (for awake they must at a dying Hour) Whether there are not a considerable Number both in and out of the Established Church, who both in their Preaching and Lives shew they are Workmen, who need not to be ashamed? And if there are, Why in the Name of Goodness is the whole Ministry of a Gospel run down and despised? This may be any thing but Conscience and Sincerity, which can never dictate such Partiality and Injustice. In short, we are all but Men of like Passions with your selves, and 'tis hard to have every little Frailty industriously sought out and exposed, not only to the ruin of our Personal Reputation, but of that of the Ministry and Religion in general, and to the prejudice of your own Souls, which are like to receive little Advantage under those Teachers you slight and despise.

Fifthly, WHAT has been said may inform us, that Gospel Ministers have a right to an honourable Maintenance and Subsistence. Here also we may be thought to plead our own Cause; but the Scripture is plain, *They who preach the Gospel, must live by the Gospel*. And how indeed can the generality of them preach it, unless they live by it? You have heard what Furniture is needful to make a Person an able Minister of the New Testament; he must be qualified by sound Doctrine, and he must be constantly employ'd in exhorting and convincing; this can never be done as it should be, without taking up all his Time and Thoughts, so that other Employments are inconsistent with the very End and Design of the Ministry, and are certainly unjustifiable, unless when we can't live tolerably by the Gospel. Besides, a necessitous Ministry is (as one * justly * Fuller's observes) almost always the Forerunner of a bankrupt Religion; so that if Ministers could preach the Gospel under Poverty and the want

Sight of
Palestine.

of all Things, yet that Circumstance would cross the End of their Preaching, and render the Truths they deliver cheap and contemptible to the unthinking Part of the World, which is always the far greater Part. I don't speak it in Flattery, but I am satisfied few among the Dissenting Ministers seek great Things for themselves; if they did, they take the wrongest Course in the World, in ranking themselves among the Dissenters; but they must live, or else they can never preach; you must support them, or else they can't exhort nor convince you. It has been the great Subject of Complaint these two last Centuries, that the Priests, a Name used by many in Contempt and Derision, have been too much aggrandiz'd and enrich'd. They who make the Complaint, I believe, will do their utmost to avoid that inconvenience; nor will I in the least deny that where Popery has prevail'd, this Extream has been commonly fallen into. But I can't but put you in mind also of the Observation of the worthy Author of the *History of the Reformation*, that the others ran into the opposite Extream, and strove to reduce the Church to her primitive Poverty, as well as to her primitive Purity. This is too plain in our Day, and it is too justly objected, that some are as much for depressing the Priesthood, as others are for exalting it; so apt are Men to fall into Extreams in Religions, as well as in other Matters; but it ought to be the Care of every good Man to avoid them on one side as well as on the other. I can't pass over this Head, without observing another thing, If God has blessed some Ministers with a competent Estate, 'tis expected they should spend them in the People's Service, and preach the Gospel freely, and take nothing, which no Man would scruple where the People can give nothing: But why it should be required when their Congregations are of sufficient Ability, I cannot understand. This is one of the many empty Notions which prevail among us,
and

and which the Selfishness and Tyranny of designing Men have introduced, tho' I hope, and partly know better Things of you who are now my Hearers, and such as accompany Salvation. In a Word, there cannot be two more unhappy Vices in a Minister, than Pride and Covetousness, and I wish some who preach most against them were not too justly noted for them. But God deliver us from those, who under that Pretence, would have none but a scandalous and a sneaking Ministry, and such as say they are for keeping all Ministers poor, in order to keep them humble; *'tis 2 Tim. better to fall into the Hands of God, than into the Hands of Men.*

Sixthly, and Lastly, Let both Minister and People strive to be both Orthodox in their Faith, and universally Holy in their Tempers and Conversations; we are commanded to *hold fast the Form of sound Words which was deliver'd unto us in Faith and Love which is in Christ Jesus.* And tho' I can't believe good Men must necessarily be of the same Mind in every thing, even in Religion it self; but that the Cry of Orthodoxy in many disputable Points, has done greater hurt to Religion, than the little Errors some have so loudly exclaim'd against; yet, after all, it is absolutely necessary, that both Ministers and People should hold the Head, and beware of sapping the Foundation of Christianity. Strive therefore to be sound in your Belief, but strive no less for that which is full as necessary as the other, even to be holy in all manner of Conversation, even to have your Conversation such as becometh the Gospel of CHRIST. Thus shall we be an honour to our Profession, and a Crown of rejoicing to one another; and thus shall we all be both comfortable in this World, and perfectly happy in the World to come.

AND thus I thought to have concluded this Discourse; but I cannot, on Consideration, forbear adding a Word or two to you of this Congregation,

gation, which I intreat you to receive with all the Candour you are capable of, as spoken from a sincere Regard to your own and the common Interest. We are here assembled to ordain a Person who has preached as a Candidate among you for some time, to be an authorized Minister of JESUS CHRIST; as 'tis your Business to choose your spiritual Guides and Instructors, so you have chosen him for yours. And accordingly, we proceed now to set him apart to minister in holy Things among you: And upon this Occasion, I would recommend two Things to you in a peculiar Manner; one is to encourage your Minister, and the other to be at Unity among your selves. Let me beseech you, in the Bowels of our LORD JESUS, to encourage him who is to minister to you in his Name. As I am apt to espouse the Cause of the younger Ministers, so I verily think we are all obliged to do it, that Religion may not die under them, when the elder ones are gone off the Stage. But you are more especially obliged to encourage him who is now to be set over you in the LORD; your Relation to him plainly binds it upon you; the opposition he is like to meet with from Satan and his Instruments, binds it upon you still more; and I persuade my self you will readily do it when you consider, that it will be both for your Honour and Interest, that he should go on cheerfully in the Work to which you have invited him. I have not the least Suspicion that this Part of your Duty will be disregarded; but I thought it not improper just to remind you of it on this Occasion. The other thing I would particularly recommend unto you, is Love and Concord; Union among Christians, is a most necessary Duty, *as much as in us lies, we are to live peaceably with all Men,* and especially to be at peace among our selves: Nor do I intreat you only to be so as you are Christians, but as you are Protestant Dissenters, a Sect which is now every where spoken against, and therefore has the greater Reason to unite for its own

own Safety and its own Defence. * To which I * Dum fin-
 might add the Consideration of your more pri- guli pug-
 vate Interest, as you are a distinct Society, the nant, uni-
 Strength and Increase of which depends more up- versi vin-
 on this than you can well imagine. In a Word, cuntur.
 let there be no Strife among you, because you are
 Brethren. We are all hastening apace to the e-
 ternal World, where both Ministers and People
 must answer for every Word and Action. Be per-
 suaded so to act, that you may give up your Ac-
 count with Joy, and not with Grief. Most
 thoughtful Persons are apprehensive that the Judg-
 ments of God are now hanging over our Heads;
 nothing is more likely to bring them than Strife
 and Contention. For the Sake of the common
 Interest therefore, that of your selves and others,
 that of the present and succeeding Generations,
 let me beg you to *follow after the Things which make
 for Peace.* What particular Methods may be most
 properly taken for this End, must be determined
 by the Circumstances of Affairs, as they shall
 stand from time to time. All that I now ask at
 your Hands, is *Love and Peace*: And while you
 follow after this, may *the God of Peace who brought
 again from the Dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shep-
 herd of the Sheep, thro' the Blood of the everlasting Co-
 venant, make you perfect in every good Work to do his
 Will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his
 Sight, thro' Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and
 ever. Amen.*

F I N I S.

QUESTIONS

PROPOSED TO

Mr. Joseph Denham

AT HIS

ORDINATION;

With his

ANSWERS,

Containing his

Confession of Faith, &c.

QUESTION I.

YOU are here professing your Desire to be set apart for the Work of the Ministry. *He that desireth the Office of a Bishop, desireth a good Work;* but then he ought not to desire it for secular, but for religious Ends. Will you therefore give us an Account of the Ends which you propose in desiring this Office?

A N-

A N S W E R.

I am in some Measure sensible, the LORD make me more sensible of the Deceitfulness of my own Heart: However, I hope, thro' the Efficacy of the Grace of God, my Design in presenting my self to be invested with Authority to serve God in the Gospel of his Son, is to promote the Glory of God, and the Salvation of Souls, which great End I would always pursue.

Q U E S T I O N II.

A Gospel Minister, as I but now shew'd you at large, ought to be sound in the Faith. I desire therefore a brief Account of yours?

A N S W E R.

FOR as much as by Fasting and Prayer, and Laying on of Hands, I am to be separated for the Work whereunto the LORD hath called me, to be solemnly invested with the Authority of a Gospel Minister, whose Commission is most Sacred, and whose Office is most Honourable, I make this Confession of my Faith before many Witnesses, and according to the Measure of Grace received, give a Reason of the Hope which is in me, with Meekness and Fear.

First, I believe there is a God, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his Being, Wisdom, Power, Holiness, Justice, Goodness and Truth; forasmuch as by the Things which are made are clearly seen and understand his eternal Power and Godhead: So that they are Fools without excuse, who say there is no God: And I believe that this LORD our God, blessed for evermore.

Secondly, THE Scriptures contained in the Old and New Testament, I believe to be of divine Authority, as they came not by the Will of Man
but

but the holy Men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. I believe in these Scriptures are revealed the great Mysteries of the Kingdom, and contain them in all that is necessary to be known, or believed, or practised in order to our obtaining everlasting Life ; for as they were given by the Inspiration of God, they are most profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, and for Instruction in Righteousness : Wherefore I desire to build on no other Foundation but that of the Prophets and Apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief Corner-stone. I believe too, that these Scriptures shall be the Rule of the final Judgment, and that the same Sentence which these pronounce now, shall be ratified and confirmed for ever ; whatever is thus bound on Earth, shall be bound in Heaven, and whatever is loosed on Earth, shall be loosed in Heaven.

Thirdly, I believe, as I have learn'd from these sacred Scriptures, the Doctrine of the Trinity, that there are Three who bear Record in Heaven, the FATHER, the WORD, and the HOLY SPIRIT ; and I receive and adore it as a great Mystery of Godliness, that these Three are One, equal in Power and in Glory.

I believe, as the Scriptures inform me, that God created all Things out of Nothing, and without him was not any thing made, which was made ; he spake, and it was done, he commanded, and it stood fast ; the Heavens declare his Glory, and the Firmament sheweth forth his Handy-works.

I believe, as he created all Things out of Nothing by the Word of his Power, so his Kingdom ruleth over all ; for he does according to his Will in the Armies of Heaven, and among the Inhabitants of the Earth, carrying on the great Designs and Purposes of his own Glory, by governing all his Creatures, and all their Actions.

I believe God made Man the Head of this lower Creation at first upright, endowing him with

with Powers fitted to serve and to enjoy him ; that after God had given him a Law suitable to his Nature, with an annexed Threatning, that in the Day that he offended, he should surely die ; Man being left to the Conduct of his own Will, soon sought out many Inventions, lost the Image of God, which consisted in Knowledge, Righteousness and Holiness ; and by this one Man's Disobedience, I believe, all his natural Issue are made Sinners, and Judgment came upon all to Condemnation.

HOWEVER, GOD willing to shew Mercy, hath appointed some to everlasting Life thro' Sanctification of the Spirit and Belief of the Truth ; and having predestinated some to the Adoption of Children by JESUS CHRIST, I believe, such shall be called, justified and glorified.

I believe that our LORD JESUS was appointed by the FATHER, to be the only Mediator between God and Man, having anointed him with a Fulness of Authority and Ability to obtain eternal Redemption for such as are lost. I believe the LORD JESUS did, by a free and voluntary Act, undertake the Office of a Redeeming Mediator, assumed Flesh, and dwelt among us ; that in the fulness of Time God sent forth his Son, made of the Woman, made under the Law : I believe he became obedient to Death, even to the Death of the Cross, fulfilled the Law, and satisfied divine Justice : I believe when he had by himself purged away our Sins, he was buried ; but on the Third Day, God having loosed the Pains of Death, he rose again from the Dead for our Justification ; whereby he was declared to be the Son of God with Power : I believe he ascended up into Heaven, sits at the Right Hand of the FATHER, where he ever lives to make Intercession for his People, till all the Ends of his Mediation are accomplished, till the Church shall be perfected, and all Enemies subdued.

I believe we are justified freely thro' the Redemption that is in CHRIST JESUS; for CHRIST is the End of the Law for Righteousness to every one who believes; not by Works of Righteousness which we have done, but according to his Mercy he saveth us by *the washing of Regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost*: I believe that Faith and Repentance are necessary Terms of Salvation, forasmuch as *without Faith 'tis impossible to please God, and without Repentance we shall all perish eternally.*

I believe the LORD JESUS, after he ascended, sent the Spirit to be a Sanctifier, Comforter and Intercessor in his People, to lead them into all Truth, which is according to Godliness, to prepare and dispose Souls for the Participation of the purchased Salvation: And I believe all who are made Partakers of the heavenly Calling, are sanctified by this Spirit of our God.

I believe that the glorious Mediator, the great Apostle and High-Priest of our Profession, hath appointed proper and distinct Officers in his Church, who are to bear his Name, plead his Cause, deliver his Message, defend his Truth, gather Churches, and guide them in his Name and Fear; that the LORD JESUS stands at the Head of this great Mission, committing this Treasure to earthen Vessels, that the Excellency of the Power may appear to be of God, and not of Man; and that according to his Promise, *he will be with them to the End of the World.*

I believe there are only Two SACRAMENTS in the New Testament of divine Institution, BAPTISM and the LORD'S-SUPPER.

IN BAPTISM, I believe we are admitted into the *visible Church*, and by the Application of Water, *in the Name of the Father, the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, we are devoted to the Grace and Service of God. I am persuaded that Believers and their Seed have a Right to this Ordinance, since the

the Promise is made to them and to their Seed, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call.

IN the LORD'S-SUPPER I believe, we are to eat and drink the Sacramental Bread and Wine in Remembrance of CHRIST JESUS ; wherein we are obliged with utmost Love and Gratitude to commemorate the satisfactory Sufferings and Death of the Mediator ; and I believe this to be a continual and abiding Ordinance in the Church, till the ascended Redeemer returns.

As there is a Time to be born, so there is a Time to die ; Death in seizing, and the Grave in receiving, observes no Order either of Sex or Age.

I believe the Resurrection of the Body, that the Sound of the last Trumpet shall raise the Dead out of their Graves, our scatter'd Dust shall be gather'd together, and the dead in CHRIST shall be raised first, when the Body that was united to CHRIST in the Grave shall be raised in Glory, and reunited to the Soul ; and they who have done Evil, shall come forth to the Resurrection of Damnation.

I believe that the final Judgment of the World shall be executed by that Man whom GOD hath appointed, whereof he has given Assurance unto all Men, forasmuch as he has raised him from the dead. The glorified Head of the Church will come a Second Time, without Sin, to judge both the Quick and the Dead, according to the Works done in the Body, whether they have been good or Evil.

I believe he will cast the wicked into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels ; that he will publicly own, acquit and crown all his Faithful ; that he will take back the glorified Saints along with him to Heaven ; and then will he present them before the Presence of his FATHER a glorious Church, not having Spot or Wrinkle, or any such thing ; then shall the Righteous with exceeding Joy enter into the Kingdom prepared for them, when GOD shall

reign immediately over all, the Mediator delivering up his Kingdom to the FATHER, reigning with him in the glory of his Godhead ; and the perfected shall be for ever with the LORD.

QUESTION III.

EVERY Christian is to give Diligence to make his *Calling and his Election sure*: But double Diligence is needful in a Minister, who is to take Care, not only of his own, but of the Souls of others. Will you therefore act as one in good earnest in the Work you are undertaking ?

ANSWER.

I purpose, thro' the Assistance of divine Grace, to give my self wholly to these Things, to Prayer, Reading, Meditation and Preaching, both in Season and out of Season. And wherein I fail, I desire I may be put in Remembrance of this Engagement, which I now make before many Witnesses.

QUESTION IV.

WHAT is your Opinion of *Popery*, and of the *Reformation* ?

ANSWER.

THE *Reformation* from *Popery* I heartily rejoice in, and bless God for, making it my earnest Request at the Throne of Grace for a farther Reformation, that the Reformed Churches may be built up into more perfect Beauty.

QUESTION V.

HERESY and SCHISM are fatal to Religion where they prevail ; Will you do your utmost in
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opposing both the one and the other, and in promoting Truth and Peace, which are contrary to them?

A N S W E R.

It is my Purpose.

QUESTION VI.

FORASMUCH as the Popish Doctrine of the Celebracy of the Clergy is contrary to Scripture, and it being lawful for Ministers to marry as well as others, if you shall ever thus alter your Condition, so as to become the Head and Master of a Family, What Care do you intend to take of it?

A N S W E R.

WHEN GOD in his Providence shall bring me into new Relations, it shall be my Endeavour that all who are mine may be the LORD's. Let others do as they please, as for me and my House, we will serve the LORD.

QUESTION VII.

MINISTERS are Men of like Passions with others, and have not only the same Infirmities, but are liable to the same Sins with the rest of Men. If ever you are found to walk disorderly, which God forbid, will you submit to brotherly Admonition?

A N S W E R.

It shall be my Endeavour, in the Strength of CHRIST, to walk without Rebuke; however, if at any time, thro' Remains of Vanity and Corruption, I may fail, (for who is there that lives, and sinneth not?) I shall account the Slightings of my Brethren's Kindness, and their Wounds Faithful.

QUEST

QUESTION VIII.

WHEN you have set your Hand to the Plough, will you not look back again, but go on preaching the Gospel both in Season and out of Season?

A N S W E R.

CONCERNING this I am very jealous over my own Heart; nevertheless I am persuaded no Temptation shall befall me, but such as is common to Man, and that God who is faithful will not suffer me to be tempted above that I am able, but that with the Temptation he will also make a Way to escape, that I may be able to bear it. I promise Faithfulness unto the Death, tho' I would not rest in my Promise to God, but in his to me.

QUESTION IX.

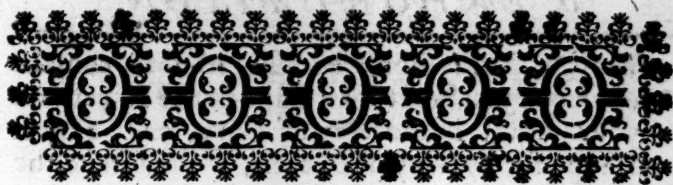
AND because there have been unhappy Differences of late in this Place, and it being too likely there may have been Faults on both sides, Do you sincerely bewail whatever has been amiss in you, and resolve, by divine Grace, for the future to watch against it?

A N S W E R.

WITH utmost Concern and Sorrow would I acknowledge and bewail the Imprudencies and Irregularities wherewith I may be charged. The melancholy Distractions and Disorders which have been amongst us, arising from Passion and Prejudice, I lament. And I promise for the future, thro' divine Grace, to Watch and Pray, lest at any time I offend. I would acknowledge God in all my Ways, intreating that he will direct my Paths.

God grant you may be faithful to this Profession, and fulfil these Engagements, and so doing obtain his Blessing.

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A N
E X H O R T A T I O N

Given to the Reverend

Mr. Joseph Denham,

The 8th Day of December, 1713.

*Upon his being solemnly set apart for the
Work of the Ministry, by Fasting, Prayer
and the Laying on of the Hands of the
Presbytery, in the Meeting-House, late
Mr. Forbes's, Gloucester.*

S I R,

MY Business at this Time is in especial
Manner with you, to whom, with your
own Consent, I am appointed by the
Brethren, to give some Counsel for your more
happy Discharge of that Office you have been, ac-
cording to the Apostolick Customs and Direction
of holy Scripture, just now solemnly invested
with. Our Hearts-Desire and Prayer is, that you
may come to the Churches of CHRIST, where at
any time you may be called to Labour in the
Fulness of the Blessing of the Gospel of Christ, as the
Expression is, Rom. xv. 29.

WHICH

WHICH Expression, because it doth contain whatsoever you are to attempt in the Execution of your Office, in the Way of Duty, or to expect and hope for by Way of Success, I shall take the Liberty somewhat particular to explain it to you. *And I am sure that when I come unto you, I shall come in the Fulness of the Blessing the Gospel.*

CHRYSOSTOM'S Notes upon the Words, is, *q. d. I know when I come to you, I shall find you a People richly furnished with all Spiritual Gifts; thinking the Expression to be of the same Import with that in the 14th Verse of this Chapter: I my self also am persuaded of you my Brethren, that ye also are full of Goodness, filled with all Knowledge, &c.* But this is not liked. Wherefore the common Opinion is, That the Apostle doth not speak of what he should find amongst the Romans when he came to them, but of what as peculiarly furnished and highly favoured Ministers of the Gospel he should bring to them.

AND so the Expression is much the same with that, *ch. i. v. 11. For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some Spiritual Gift, to the end you may be established.*

AND to this Exposition is apparently justify'd by the Context, where having spoken particularly of the mighty Success that had attended his preaching the Gospel in other Parts of the Gentile World; he expresseth his Desire of coming to Rome on the same Errand, being confident he should perform his Duty there, with the same plentiful Success that attended his Labours elsewhere.

I must observe to you here, that this Expression [*The Fulness of the Blessing of the Gospel*] may be understood either as importing, 1. Something peculiar to the Apostolick Times; or, 2. Other things common to the Christian Church in every Age.

1. As importing something extraordinary and peculiar to the Apostolick Primitive Times.

And

And then it means a particular pouring out the Spirit upon the first Preachers of the Gospel, enabling them to work Miracles for Confirmation of the Doctrine they preached. Which Doctrine being new, and directly contrary to the current Opinions and prevailing Notions of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, could never have made its Way thro' the World, but by those extraordinary Methods.

THIS was foretold by the *Prophets*, and richly and plentifully bestowed upon the *holy Apostles*.

IN which Blessing also, many of the next succeeding Ages had their Share, till Christianity by such flagrant Evidencetaking Root every where, and being established, there was no longer need of such extraordinary Methods to be used in its behalf.

THEY have therefore, for many Ages, been diffus'd, and are now what none but wild and Brain-sick Enthusiasts pretend to. Of which Number, Sir, you have given us full Proof that you are not; it would be loss of Time, and an Indecency towards you, for me to urge, that *this* is no Part of what *you are to endeavour*.

2. As importing other Things common to the Christian Church in every Age.

WITH respect unto *these*, a Minister may be said to come to, and be with a People in the Fulness of the Blessing of the Gospel; when,

1. HE himself hath well learned the Gospel he comes to preach.

2. WHEN he faithfully executes the Office he hath undertaken.

3. WHEN the Blessing of God crowns his Labours with abundant Success for his and the People's growing in Grace and Peace, in Holiness and Comfort.

1. WHEN he (the Minister) hath himself well learn'd the Gospel he comes to preach.

THIS means Two Things.

1st, THAT he hath a clear comprehensive Knowledge of Christian Doctrine, and firmly believes it to be true.

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2dly, THAT he stands well affected to the Design of the holy Religion, being heartily in Love with the righteous and good Precepts thereof.

1. THAT a Minister may be said to have well learn'd the Gospel, that understands and believes the Doctrines of it.

2. THAT hath a clear and comprehensive Knowledge of the Things therein taught, and a satisfying Conviction of their Truth.

AND here, Sir, 'tis *your Duty*, by way of Addition unto what you have already laudably attained, to endeavour continually for a *more distinct and clear Apprehension* of Christian Verities, that you may from time to time preach *intelligibly*. For,

IF the Preacher be in the Clouds, 'twould be a strange thing if those that sit under his Ministry be not in Darkness.

BUT no Man can distinctly utter what he himself doth not distinctly apprehend; if his Conceptions be incompleat, confus'd and uninstrueting, so of necessity will his Discourses be, which, how much soever they may be admir'd by Fools for their supposed *Mysteriousness*, they will not miss of being despis'd by Men of Understanding for their *Nonsense*. Most certain it is, that there are divers important Truths in Scripture reveal'd, of which we should not have known any thing if they had not been reveal'd, and of which we cannot know so much here as we shall in Heaven, and of which we shall never perfectly comprehend whatsoever is honourable in them, they having an infinite Compass, that will employ and recompence our Researches unto all Eternity.

NEVERTHELESS, what in Scripture is said of these Things, may certainly be understood, else no Rational Person can devise why 'tis said, for we can neither be *directed* or entertained by what we do not understand. But it is highly injurious to the divine Wisdom and Goodness to suppose he hath given us a Revelation that cannot possibly serve to any valuable Purpose.

WHERE-

WHEREFORE I advise you, Sir, continually to endeavour, to have clear and distinct Apprehension of the true Sense of those Scriptures, you would from time to time recommend to the People, and so to speak of them, as you may be easily understood by the most unlearned amongst them.

MOREOVER, 'tis your Duty to study for a *comprehensive Knowledge* in Christian Truths, that you may *fully* preach the Gospel of God.

Not absolutely comprehensive (for here before we can know but in Part, or Prophecy, i. e. preach but in Part) but *comparatively comprehensive*. You ought as much as possibly you can, to acquaint your self with every thing revealed for the Instruction and Edification of CHRIST's People; and to know them all to a greater degree of Perfection than may reasonably be expected from the Generality of those you are to instruct.

AND you should carefully see to it, that your Belief of the Truths you apprehend, be *well founded*, that you may *preach boldly and defend strongly*.

To this End, you ought to be well acquainted with the Letter, Sense and Argument of holy Scripture, the only Foundation of all Christian Truth: That so, from thence presenting the People with a well disposed Frame or Scheme of true Religion; you may be able from the same Magazine, to draw forth substantial Arguments to defend it, against all Opposers.

'Tis indispensibly necessary that you have due regard to this last mentioned Particular; because, your Lot is fallen in an Age, wherein (tho' that Preaching which in all Ages has unreasonably been called Foolishness, cannot fail of doing good, yet) there are vast Numbers, who do certainly know when a Man *truly preaches foolishly*, and who take a marvelous Pleasure in sending pointed Satyr into all Preachers thro' the Sides of such,

As therefore you would not do more Mischief to the truly Noble and Divine Religion you are to preach, by giving an Handle to the envenom'd Humour of pretended Wits, than the Malice of persecuting Pagans or Papists have been able to effect, *preach good Sense*, and back it with strong *Scripture Argument*.

'Tis evident, no Man can possibly be qualify'd for such a Performance, but by one of these two Ways:

1. By Virtue of immediate Inspiration, which none but Madmen now pretend to; or,
2. By GOD's Blessing on long continued studying, under the Direction of well furnish'd Tutors.

'Tis an Argument of the most sottish Stupidity, when Men can persuade themselves that without the Help of a Miracle, they can of a sudden be fit to pass, accomplish'd for the Pulpit, from the Loom, Shopboard, or Plough Tail.

AND they that contentedly sit under them, when better Helps may be had, are like unto them, and never like to be otherwise.

2dly, 'Tis necessary that a Minister *stand well affected to the Design of the Christian Religion*, being heartily in love with the righteous and good Precepts of it.

HE cannot be said to have well learn'd an useful Art, that can only *talk* about it in proper Terms, but can do nothing at it.

RELIGION is a practical Thing, a Doctrine according to Godliness: All Christian Verities are revealed to promote sober, righteous and godly Living.

THERE is nothing *purely Speculative* in all our Creed.

HE therefore (only he) has well learn'd the Christian Doctrine, that perceives and loves the Duty it points to.

WHICH a Minister of all Men should do. For,

BESIDES that, he will and cannot preach *that* to others with an ill Grace, that he doth not relish and like himself; I say besides that, if he should chance to do some good by a tolerable Sermon, he'd infallibly do more hurt by renversing it in an ill Life.

SUCH Men have been and are the greatest Curse to a Nation. Nor is there any Reason to hope they will ever be a Blessing. Unto the wicked God saith, *What hast thou to do to declare my Statutes, or that thou should'st take my Covenant in thy Mouth? Seeing thou hatest Instruction, and castest my Words behind thee.*

THEY may do good, but they have no Promise that they *shall*, nor the People, that *they shall* receive good by them; if they prefer the Ministry to that of God's sincerely devoted Servants. But when a Man hath well studied the Gospel of CHRIST, and filled his Head with a well digested System of Evangelical Truths, Truths that have kindled a Flame of pure fervent Love to God, CHRIST, and SOULS, in his Heart; when *this* Man comes to preach what he knows, believes and loves; he is, of all others the likeliest to be a Blessing to the People.

GOD having furnish'd him for, and inclin'd him to the Work of the Ministry, will undoubtedly be with him in his Work; and then what can hinder, but that the Pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his Hands.

WHEREFORE, Sir, let me meekly beseech you, that you will constantly endeavour in the Use of all appointed Means, to get your *Heart warm'd with divine Love*, as carefully as to have your *Mind illumin'd with the Light of Knowledge*, that speaking from your own Heart to the People, you here not miss of reaching theirs. Regardable may are the Words of the excellent Mr. Howe *. * Preface
 " The very Opinion that we preach only for *to Mr. Cor-*
 " Form-sake and to keep up the Custom, and bet's En-
 " believe not or regard what we our selves say, quiry, &c.
 " (as

“ (as well as the thing it self) is no small (nor
 “ perhaps uncommon) Hindrance to the Success
 “ of Preaching at this Day. It is hard to be se-
 “ rious in hearing What I think he is not serious
 “ in himself who preaches it : If I apprehend he
 “ trifles, 'tis a great Temptation to me to do so
 “ too”----- Whereas (as Dr. Bates saith) what is
 spoken from the Heart, goes to the Heart, by a
 natural Sympathy in the Spirits of Men.

LET it therefore be evident (Brother) by your
 most serious Behaviour in and out of the Pulpit,
 that (to use the Words of the just now mentioned
 great Man) “ You do not study divine Subjects,
 “ only to frame Discourses of them, wherewith
 “ to entertain the People for an Hour ; but for
 “ your own Use and Practice too ; that you live
 “ the Things you teach, and eat of the Food
 “ you prepare for others ; that in good earnest
 “ you aim at saving *your self and them that hear*
 “ *you* ; and do really venture your own Soul up-
 “ on the same Bottom, upon which you would
 “ persuade your Hearers to venture theirs,
 “ taking all possible Care, *lest when you have*
 “ *preached to others, you your self should be a Cast-*
 “ *away*, id. ibid.

BUT this shall suffice as to the first thing in-
 tended, by a Minister's coming to the People, *in*
the Fulness of the Blessing of the Gospel of Christ.

HE must come *well instructed in, well affected to*
 the Gospel.

2dly, HE must faithfully execute the Office he
 hath undertaken.

THAT is, Sir, you must, as ever you would
 come to this People *in the Fulness of the Blessing of*
the Gospel of Christ, give your self to Meditation, Read-
ing and Prayer, that you may from time to time
give full Proof of your Ministry.

You must preach the Word, be Instant in Season and
out of Season,

Divide the Word aright, giving to every one his Por-
tion.

You

You must declare to the People the whole Counsel of God, hiding nothing from them.

You must instruct, exhort, rebuke and comfort, according as the Circumstances of your People require.

You must do nothing by Partiality, but approve your self to the Consciences of your Hearers, as in the Sight of God.

You must take the Oversight of the Flock as one that must give Account.

You must not be weary in Well-doing, but steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, as knowing your Labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

You must duly administer the Sacraments, not giving that which is holy unto Dogs, nor denying unto any one the least of God's Children the Bread which he hath prepared for them.

AND in concert with the faithful People, you must prudently and boldly execute the Discipline by CHRIST appointed, for humbling and reforming the Scandalous, and preserving the Purity of the Christian Society, over which you are set, and the Credit of the Holy Religion you and they profess.

AND here I cannot but earnestly recommend to your serious and frequent Perusal, the excellent Performance of the reverend and judicious Dr. Daniel Williams, respecting Mr. Gravenor's and Mr. Wright's Ordination, where you will find things, not only much better than any I am capable of offering, but such as with the divine Blessing will be of more beneficial Use to you, than what you may meet with in many other Books.

I pass now to the Third thing absolutely necessary for your coming to CHRIST's People in the Fulness of the Blessing of the Gospel of Christ, which is, (what tho' you cannot, properly speaking, give to the People yet) what upon your humble importunate Prayer you may well groundedly hope to obtain for them.

THE Blessing of God to crown your Labours with abundant Success.

THO' a Paul plants and an Apollos waters, there will be no Increase except God give it.

'Tis true, the Blessing of Heaven usually attends the Labours to well furnished and faithful Preachers, but it is not tied to it.

THE most Skilful and Faithful have not always been the most Successful.

THE very best Preacher that ever opened his Mouth to teach the People, was for the most part rejected and despised by his Hearers.

FEW believed the Report even of the Son of God himself, tho' he spake so as never Man spake, and liv'd so as none ever liv'd besides him.

EXCEPT therefore the Spirit go along with the Word, tho' it shou'd be spoke from the most zealous Heart, employing the most eloquent Tongue, it would effect nothing but the further blinding and hardening those that heard it.

BUT, Sir, if you be faithful, *you may hope* that the blessed Author of our Faith will make bare his Arm, and exert his mighty Power for the succeeding your Labours; and then comes the *Fulness of the Blessing of the Gospel indeed*. Then the Saviour will ride in the Chariot of Salvation thro' the Audience, conquering, and to conquer. Then the Word will run thro' all the Powers of the Soul, and be glorified in them, by chasing the Darkness of Ignorance and Error out of the Mind, and the poysonous Venom of Hatred of GOD out of the Heart. *Then the Word, as a two-edged Sword, will effectually separate between the Sinner and his Lusts.* The Weapons of your Spiritual Warfare will prove mighty to pull down the strong Holds of the Devil, and set captive Souls at Liberty; so that Converts shall flock unto JESUS CHRIST, as Doves to their Windows; and many such shall be added daily to the Church as shall be saved.

THEN

THEN the Converted will be more confirmed in their most holy Faith, the Light of their Minds being like the Morning Light that shineth more and more for a clearer and more distinct Preception of divine Truths, their Certainty and Excellence.

THEN their Knowledge sensibly encreases, both with respect unto Truths absolutely and relatively considered. So that they not only grow more intimately and thoroughly acquainted with the Truths they in part knew before, but observe the Relation they bear, and the Subordination they stand in one towards another, towards the compacting a perfect Body, a beautiful-useful Frame of Truths, *display the manifold Wisdom of God.*

THEN their improved Knowledge produceth a more confirmed Faith, by which they become more rationally and sedately bold in their Profession, being Proof against all the Cavils and Objections of infidel Adversaries : Able pertinently to contend for the Faith, by such Arguments as shall stop the Mouths of Gainsayers.

THEN their Faith, founded on the Scriptures rightly understood, is productive of a pure and fervent Love to God and one another.

THE unparallel'd Perfection of the divine Nature then produceth the most superlative Estimation, the profoundest Veneration and most delightful Complacency in their Souls towards God.

THE unmatched Love of CHRIST to them, produceth Wondering, Praise, ingenuous Gratitude, dutiful Observance, Firm and Trust.

THEIR subjection to the same LORD, engagement in the same Interests, and Title to the same Inheritance believ'd, effecteth the most Cordial Benevolence to each other. A Benevolence prompting to a chearful Performance of friendly Offices for each other ; nothing being done for Strife or Contention, Self-interest or Vain-glory, but each in Honour preferring others before himself ; all study to please one another for mutual

Edification, *keeping the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace.*

Now the People live in beauteous Peace and Concord, giving none Offence; they strive to be useful to all, and to cause the good Ways of God to be well spoken of by all, that they may be the Glory of CHRIST in the World, his Epistle recommendatory, seen and read of all Men.

THEY walk daily in the Fear of God, filled with the Comforts of the HOLY GHOST.

THEY live above the World, and rejoice in hope of the Glory of God.

WHEN it is thus, Sir, you will grant, and every Body will grant, a full Blessing is indeed bestowed on the People; such a Blessing this is, as nothing remains beyond it to be wished, except Heaven it self.

THUS it was in the Primitive Apostolick Times, when the HOLY GHOST was plentifully poured out; when the Gospel of CHRIST rejoiced as a strong Man to run its Race, carrying Light, Life, Love and Joy with it wherever it went; when the Preachers of the Word found the Souls they approach'd as so many barren, dark, cold and dead Wilderneffes, and when they went from 'em to go to others, left them well furnished beautiful Gardens of Pleasure for the Redeemer to walk in, where flourished every Plant of the Celestial Paradise, whose beautiful Aspect and fragrant Odours delighted God, Angels and Men.

AND thus there is abundant Reason from Scripture, to hope it shall be again. Do you, Brother, do whatever is possible to you to expedite the Revolution of those *Haleyon Days* of that truly Golden Age. And then, *When the chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a Crown of Glory that fadeth not away.*

BUT here you the Christian People must put to the helping Hand.

If your Minister shall have a full Blessing vouchsaf'd to him, you are, you see, to be great Sharers

Sharers therein. It behoves you therefore to join your earnest Prayers and Endeavours with his, for that End. In order hereunto,

1. BE willing to be made acquainted with the whole Counsel of God. Be willing, if you would have a full Blessing, to receive a full Gospel. Let every one of you from the Heart say to your Minister what the *Jews* said to *Moses* that eminent Servant of GOD, *Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say, and speak thou unto us, all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee; and we will hear it and do it.* As you love your Souls, welcome all the Mind and Will of God right, accept whatever God offers, or expect no good from him. They that will hear of nothing but the Promises, have Interest in nothing that I know of but the Threatnings. Deut.v.27.

THEY that are obstinately partial in God's Law, shall have no benefit by his Gospel.

2. Do what is in your Power to encourage your Minister to be wholly in the study of your Spiritual Welfare. Let your Christian Generosity render his Mind disencumber'd, and free to bend its whole Force to promote your Edification.

BESIDES, that you are expressly commanded to do this by the Law of CHRIST, you have brought your selves under the Obligation of an express Promise under your Hands so to do; which therefore in point of Truth and Faithfulness you must perform.

3. LABOUR constantly to live suitably to the holy Doctrine, turn your Knowledge into Practice, ever remembering you are happy in your Knowledge of divine Things, *only if you do them.*

Now may you all so do your respective Duties, that the Minister and People may rejoice together in the Day of CHRIST.

F I N I S.

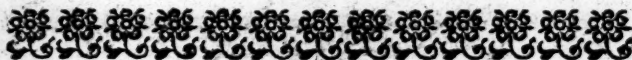
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